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**Montana Department of Commerce Awards over \$1.1 Million
in Workforce Training Funds in Billings, Great Falls &
Hobson**

(HELENA) – The Department of Commerce has awarded a total of more than \$1.1 million dollars in Workforce Training Grants (WTG) to four Montana businesses in Billings, Great Falls and Hobson.

“Montana’s on the move with a booming economy that garnered 4.8 percent economic growth in 2007,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “A skilled work force is essential for continued economic growth, and the Workforce Training Grant Program is an outstanding resource to enhance the skill set of Montana’s workers.”

Ernest Health Inc.’s *Advanced Care Hospital of Montana* in Billings will receive \$575,000 in WTG funds. The St. Vincent Healthcare Foundation in Billings has been approved for \$200,000 in WTG funds. Cable Technology of Montana, Inc. will receive \$342,138 in WTG funds. Hobson Insurance in Hobson has been approved for \$18,334 in WTG funds. All applications were approved by the Workforce Training Grant Application Review Committee.

“The Workforce Training Grant program is an effective partnership that helps businesses succeed, guarantees a good wage, enhances employee skill levels, and actually makes money for the state,” said Anthony Preite, Director of the Montana Department of Commerce. “WTG helps fund the state budget and many state programs. In most cases,

companies repay the amount of awarded funds before they actually draw down those funds.”

At Governor Schweitzer’s request, the 60th Montana Legislature increased funding for WTG from \$1.4 million annually, to nearly \$4 million annually. The program was designed to assist established businesses and new businesses in their expansion efforts. It is targeted toward businesses that create at least one net, new job that pays at least the lower of the current county average or the current state average. That wage can include fringe benefits. New employees must work at least thirty-five hours per week year round. Program applicants must demonstrate that at least fifty percent of their sales originate outside of Montana. The maximum funding available to train a single employee is \$5,000.

Ernest Health, Inc.—Billings

Ernest Health, Inc. is building a new 40 bed long term acute care hospital, *Advanced Care Hospital of Montana*, in Billings. This hospital will provide health care services currently not available in the state, and create as many as 150 new jobs when fully operational. The WTG funds will be used to train 115 new employees over the next two years.

St. Vincent Healthcare Foundation— Billings

This is a proposal sponsored by the St. Vincent Healthcare Foundation on behalf of St. Vincent Healthcare in Billings, St. James Healthcare in Butte, and Holy Rosary Healthcare in Miles City. St. Vincent Healthcare Foundation will earmark the WTG funds for providing onsite orientation and/or clinical training through the “hospital” performance based development system for 40 new employees—32 nurses and 8 medical technicians--of the three Montana hospitals over the next two years.

Cable Technology of Montana, Inc.—Great Falls

The business of Cable Technology of Montana, Inc. is to design, produce and sell cable assemblies/harness systems into the aerospace industry. Because the work is engineered to customer specifications by individuals with specialty training, cable and harness assembly is widely considered to be one of the most difficult and time-consuming assembly phases of manufacturing. The company proposes to train 100 new employees in phases of 10 employees every quarter for two years.

Hobson Insurance—Hobson

Hobson Insurance is an independent insurance agency that provides insurance for commercial accounts who are members of national buying groups including sporting goods retailers, athletic dealers and retail stores. Due to an increase in business, the company is adding 2,000 sq ft to its building on Hobson's Main Street and will have the addition complete in late 2007. Over the next two years, WTG funds will be used to train five new staff members—two new commercial lines producers, two new customer service representatives and one new personal lines producer.

Since fiscal year 2006, 16 WTG awards have been made and award funding has ranged from \$75,000 to \$1,955,000. Those awards have been leveraged with more than \$73 million in business investments. More than 1,500, good paying, new jobs have been created for Montana workers.

All WTG funds for fiscal year 2008 have not been awarded. Additional WTG funds are available.

Contact Nancy Guccione, WTG Program Manager, at 406-841-2744 or nguccione@mt.gov for program specific questions.

Interested applicants can find guidelines and current and country average wage rates on the web at: <http://www.mtfinanceonline.com/WorkForceGrnts.asp>

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